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## A Vindication For The CIA

At least one part of the government should welcome the publication of the Pentagon papers. That is the Central Intelligence Agency, whose judgments of the military situation in North Vietnam and of the nature of the struggle in South Vietnam prior to 1965 have been vindicated by the Pentagon's documents.

These papers show that the CIA, under its director, John J. McCone, was reporting accurately on diplomatic and military developments in Southeast Asia but that its reports were being either ignored, overlooked, or misinterpreted in the highest councils of the government in Washington. For example, the Johnson administration continued to describe the insurgency in South Vietnam as essentially the work of the North Vietnamese government long after the CIA had reported that it actually was an indigenous movement among the peasants of South Vietnam. President Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk were describing the Viet Cong as a virtual vassal of Hanoi after the CIA had reported that it was mainly home-grown and representative of a large part of the South Vietnamese population.

The reports of the Central Intelligence Agency indicated that the conflict in South Vietnam was essentially an in-country uprising. The Johnson administration based its policy on the assumption that it was essentially an aggressive move against the government of South Vietnam by the government of North Vietnam. This is a crucial difference because if the CIA

was right — and subsequent events show that it was — then the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were basing their whole Southeast Asia policy on the wrong assumption.

After the spring of 1965, American commanders in Saigon, together with the American ambassador there, fairly glowed with optimism in their public statements and their briefings for congressmen even though it was known in the Pentagon that the military situation was bad and getting worse. Events continued to prove the commanders wrong and the war refused to go the way the Joint Chiefs of Staff kept saying it would go. To the public, which knew only what it read in the papers, the reason just about had to be faulty intelligence, and the prestige of the CIA fell sharply.

The Pentagon papers have revealed that the optimism of the generals and the administration did not reflect the judgments of the CIA after all and that the developments of the war which seemed always to take the Pentagon and the White House by surprise were being rather accurately predicted by the CIA.

The CIA took a frightful public drubbing after the failure in 1961 of the invasion of the Bay of Pigs, which appeared to have resulted from bad intelligence. In the light of what later happened in Vietnam, it would be interesting to see the record of the CIA's reports at that time. It is now possible to suspect that the CIA accurately predicted what would happen and that the generals simply refused to be deterred. — L.H.